



Tenant Inspectors

Short Notice Inspection dated February 2013

Update of Tenant Inspectors Report 3
Dated September 2007.



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Preface

Soha's Tenant Inspectors project started because of an idea from the Audit Commission that they may go lighter on inspections if an RSL had tenant inspectors in place. The Chairperson of the Tenants' Forum was concerned that they must be able to show an ability to do the work correctly as they would want the proof from the inspectors to show they are capable of doing a good job.

This led to a bid to Soha's *Excellence Fund* (the re-investment of efficiency savings) which was successful. The first Tenant Inspectors' training took place in October 2006.

There are currently 15 inspectors who decide the area they will inspect and how they will go about this.

Tenant Inspectors help Soha Housing to understand and put the views and needs of tenants first.

We carry out detailed and robust assessments of the services and functions provided by Soha Housing and its partner agencies to check that they do 'what it says on the tin'; to help them improve.

We promote and develop the role of tenants in Soha Housing's business; working towards a joint approach to regulation.

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Inspection Team

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Jargon Buster
R I – Resident Involvement
H R – Human Resources
SMART – Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timing.

Introduction

It was agreed in November 2012 by the Tenant Inspectors team that a short notice inspection should take place.

The task would involve inspecting recommendations RI:2, RI:9 and RI:11, made in the resident involvement report, drawn up in September 2007. We wanted to know if recommendations had been acted on and what difference they have made.

The recommendations were:

- All department policies and procedures to be updated to include RI aims, incorporating the RI sections of the Soha Housing compact.
- Staff resident involvement objectives documents needs to be clearer, less repetitive and continuously monitored.
- Explore methods to involve younger families in RI activities.

How was this checked?

Methodology

Together the team devised a project plan that enabled everyone to look at specific areas. These included:

- *Tenant telephone interviews*
- *Staff interviews*
- *Reviewing written evidence*
- *Current list of staff objectives*
- *Anonymous survey of all staff.*

What did you find?

Desktop review:

The following documents were reviewed:

1. 6 samples policies to review the resident involvement element
2. Proof of current Resident monitoring which included the resident involvement impact report
3. Information from H R to explain how they ensured all staff objectives were SMART. This included the staff induction programme.
4. Agenda list for Chief executive briefings
5. Copies of resident involvement reports that have been sent to the forum for the last 3 staff meetings.
6. Proof of what Soha do to involve younger residents and families

The inspectors were satisfied that improvements to the paperwork provided showed that recommendations have been implemented and felt that the standards are improving. However, this inspection does not include how resident involvement aims stated in the various policies etc. are activated and may need further investigation.

With reference to recommendation RI: 2, the inspectors identified that there is now a robust policy in place.

The list of staff RI objectives clarified that these are now clearer, less repetitive and are continuously monitored. There are many sound RI objectives; others would seem to need more clarification being work related. There is an overall improvement in staff RI objectives.

Resident Involvement is part of the induction programme where shadowing members of the RI team is required. As RI is part of Sohas core aims and objectives, this should be emphasized at an earlier stage of induction.

With regard to involvement of younger families, several methods have been explored and instigated with success. In records of RI activities we did not see any evidence of feedback assessments or breakdown of numbers of tenants involved. No record of any on-going impact from these events is recorded.

Tenant Telephone Interviews.

Of 10 names attempted, only 2 residents were available for interview.

The results were as follows:

Q. How do you feel about Resident Involvement at Soha?

A. Both residents gave a positive response regarding resident involvement.

Q. Do you think Resident Involvement has had a positive impact on Soha?

A. Both residents felt that resident involvement does improve services for Soha residents.

Q. Have you ever been invited to be included in Resident Involvement?

A. 1 person has had an invite to get involved.

Q. Have you been involved in the past and what was your experience?

A. Only 1 person had been involved and thought only some of the topics discussed were relevant to them.

Q. Do you receive copies of Tenants Times and Home talk?

A. Both residents confirmed they received these publications

Interview with H R Manager

All staff RI objectives are set in the spring and then reviewed in the autumn. All objectives state how objectives are set and how staff interact with residents.

Objectives are set in accordance with the staff member's role within the organisation. The staff members that do not have regular interaction with residents are encouraged to assist at the resident open events in the spring and summer. All staff are given support to achieve their staff objectives. The RI Manager is responsible for monitoring the achievements.

The setting of objectives is done to ensure that resident involvement is embedded across the organisation in line with the corporate aims and objectives.

Customer services staff have the most opportunity to talk to residents regarding resident involvement opportunities. Line managers are encouraged to offer ways to improve staff RI objectives to ensure they are SMART.

Staff Survey

The survey results looked at by departments, as opposed to the overall company returns, showed a wide disparity with some departments showing a high level of commitment to resident involvement and others less so.

The survey indicates a wide variance between departments in how RI is assessed and personal feedback given. There does not seem to be any consistency despite there being H R procedures to avoid this oversight.

The encouragement of staff to use their own initiative on RI varies widely by department, as does the amount of time/attention staff say they devote to RI. The scale of importance staff feel RI is to their role varies greatly from almost 100% in one department to around 50% in others. This is disappointing as R I is touted as a core objective within Soha.

There appears to be a variance between the responses given from staff in staff appraisals and those received via the anonymous survey.

Conclusion:

Overall the Tenant Inspectors were pleased with the resident involvement content of the paperwork inspected but further investigation would be required to see how this is implemented.

As part of the core objectives, Resident Involvement needs to have a higher priority in the induction programme. The encouragement and support for staff to use their own initiative on RI varies widely by department as does the amount of time and attention staff can devote to RI. The anonymous survey results showed that there seems to be a wide variance in how R I is assessed by department.

Overall recommendations have been acted upon and were showing a vast improvement since the original inspection in September 2007.

Targets and assessments need to be sharpened up to be as SMART as possible.

Were our recommendations implemented?

Since the original inspection, things have improved considerably. All the Tenant Inspectors were satisfied that the recommendations had been successfully implemented.

However, it was noted that the not all departments are assessed equally by Soha and a more robust monitoring system is required.

Did our recommendations make a difference?

RI:2.

Overall, the inspectors were satisfied that the recommendations were being implemented.

RI:9

The current list of staff RI objectives have been greatly improved, these still require improvement.

RI:11

Several methods to involve with younger families have been explored and implemented with success however a stronger audit trail is required to record the on-going impact.

Strengths:

Conclusion	Evidence 1	Evidence 2	Evidence 3
Customer satisfaction	Desktop Review	Staff interviews	Staff survey
Increased Resident Involvement.	Staff interviews.	Tenant interviews	Desktop Review
Inclusion of young families	Staff Interviews	Desktop Review	Impact Report

Weaknesses:

Conclusion	Evidence 1	Evidence 2	Evidence 3
Delivering equal support and encouragement for all staff to achieve their RI objectives.	Desktop review	Staff Survey	Staff interviews
Staff perception regarding the relevance of RI within Soha.	Staff survey	Staff interviews	Desktop reviews.
Feedback to staff regarding R I	Staff survey	Staff interviews	Desktop reviews.
The relevance of importance of RI in staff induction process.	Staff survey	Staff interviews.	Desktop reviews.

Recommendations

1. Staff R I objectives and monitoring need to be SMART to ensure all departments are assessed equally.
2. To raise the staff perception of RI's importance in their role and Soha's future.
3. Improve the standard of feedback to all staff.
4. Give higher priority to RI during staff induction.
5. We would like to see new involvement opportunities. Perhaps a suggestion box could be introduced in an accessible place for Soha staff and tenants.
6. We would like to see more robust methods of monitoring the profiles of involved residents.

Soha's response

This is a timely and useful check on resident involvement at Soha and particularly how staff objectives help towards building a culture of RI. The Tenant Inspectors raise some pertinent points and I welcome their recommendations.

Catherine Little, 21 March 2013

Recommendation	Soha's Response	Responsible	Date
1. Staff R I objectives and monitoring need to be SMART to ensure all departments are assessed equally.	Agreed. We will look at a slightly different way of doing staff objectives, which may mean some areas have whole team projects or objectives which individuals contribute towards. This should make monitoring more manageable and meaningful.	CI	May 13 Review Oct 13 and Mar 14
2. To raise the staff perception of RI's importance in their role and Soha's future.	Agreed. We will continue to have a strong message about the importance of involving residents, and will run a set of officer led briefings, but also have clearer feedback from involved residents directly to staff teams	CI/ RLP	Throughout the year (check Mar 14)
3. Improve the standard of feedback to all staff.	Agreed. See above re: tenants feeding back directly. We will also have an internal communications campaign about the difference RI makes	CI	Throughout the year (check Mar 14)
4. Give higher priority to RI during staff induction.	Agreed and done. Soha's new induction process includes a session with the RI team within the first month of employment.	Done	Done

<p>5. We would like to see new involvement opportunities. Perhaps a suggestion box could be introduced in an accessible place for Soha staff and tenants.</p>	<p>Agreed. We do have a staff suggestion scheme and a tenant suggestion page on our website. However, we will think about the best way to pick up on new ideas as part of our new RI Strategy (due 13/14)</p>	<p>CI / RLP</p>	<p>July 13</p>
<p>6. We would like to see more robust methods of monitoring the profiles of involved residents.</p>	<p>At the moment, the profiles of involved residents are monitored using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring forms, or • Data capture information. <p>We have a fairly accurate picture of who is involved and this has been representative for 3 years. Ideally, it'd be great to have a database to pull this information together in a more robust way. Exploring this is part of a much bigger IT prioritisation plan, so is on the cards, but not an immediate action.</p> <p>In the interim, we are producing a simple in house system by which to monitor involvement and help with succession planning</p>	<p>RLP</p>	<p>Mar 14</p>